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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4285  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1025  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA, EUR/SE

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [LE](#) [CY](#)  
SUBJECT: NOD TO SLEIMAN "NO SURPRISE" TO CYPRIOTS

REF: SECSTATE 163945

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald Schlicher, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Polchief December 7 delivered Reftel points on Lebanon to MFA Middle East Desk Officer Dionysus Dionysiou. It was vital that Cyprus support immediate, "non-linked" Lebanese presidential elections in its diplomatic discussions and public commentary, he emphasized. Dionysiou responded by noting that March 14's decision to back Armed Forces Commander Michel Sleiman for Lebanon's top position had come as no surprise to the RoC's charge d'affaires in Beirut, "who knew about it for months." Cyprus considered Sleiman the best candidate Lebanon realistically could expect, he continued, given the fractious political environment in the Levant. The RoC favored quick presidential elections in a process that respected Lebanon's constitution, Dionysiou added, although he acknowledged that Beirut's political power brokers could and would twist the supreme law to accommodate personal interests.

¶2. (C) Casting doubt on his envoy's prescience (or perhaps his slowness in reporting), Dionysiou claimed to know nothing of the Lebanese opposition demanding a "package deal" that could take formulation of the cabinet and governing agenda from March 14's hands; he promised to investigate and report back with the RoC's position. Concluding the conversation, Dionysiou explained that Cyprus, as a small nation in a dangerous neighborhood, must walk a careful line on Lebanon. He therefore doubted his government would take a clear public stand on the need for immediate, "non-linked" presidential elections there.

SCHLICHER